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09/936,900	09/19/2001	Makoto Inoue	01309.00015	2911

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EXAMINER

HO, THOMAS Y

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

3677

DATE MAILED: 08/06/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/936,900

Applicant(s)

INOUE ET AL.

Examiner

Thomas Y Ho

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 01 June 2004.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-27, 29, 30, 32 and 33 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-27, 29, 30, 32 and 33 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Status of Claims

Claims 1-27, 29-30, and 32-33 are pending. Claims 28 and 31 have been withdrawn or cancelled.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

Claims 1-5, 8-12, 22-27, 29-30, and 32-33 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Hennig US6587827.

As to claim 1, Hennig discloses, a distribution support equipment configured with a computer system and customer-side equipment (home PC or telephone), distributor-side equipment 10/12, and supplier-side equipment 14/15/15a, each equipment being accessible to the computer system through a communication channel 8 for supporting distribution related to business dealings among customers corresponding to the customer-side equipment, distributors corresponding to the distributor-side equipment, and suppliers corresponding to the supplier-side equipment, comprising: a database storing registered customer Ids (information of any customer placing an order through client 10) and respective merchandise distribution routes through which each of plural sorts of merchandise ordered by each of the customers is delivered to the customer; the merchandise distribution routes being determined by the distributors and suppliers

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selected; customer specifying means (col.8; see Table 1, wherein the order event has an entry for ship to addresses and invoice addresses) for specifying a customer who has access to the computer system from respective customer-side equipment (col.3, ln.42-46); route specifying means (col.1, ln.55-65; col.5, ln.50-67; col.6, ln.1-15; this completely automated order/delivery process can specify different routes based on customer preference, number/locations of destinations, and the amount of product available at each supplier) for specifying each of the merchandise distribution routes for plural sorts of merchandise by accessing the database and then separating one route from another upon receipt of order signals from the customer specified by the customer specifying means to deliver the plural sorts of merchandise to the customer; and information processing means (col.6, ln.4-14, ln.33-41) for making arrangements to provide the customer with merchandise items meeting the order signals through respective merchandise distribution routes specified by the route specifying means.

As to claim 2, Hennig discloses, wherein the route specifying means is configured to separate the merchandise distribution routes from each other on the basis of product number and category of each of the merchandise items according to predetermined settings (col.5, ln.50-67; col.6, ln.1-5).

As to claim 3, Hennig discloses, wherein the information processing means is provided with directed-at-dealer ordering means for automatically placing orders to dealers serving as order receivers of respective merchandise routes according to the order signals received from the customer at a time.

As to claim 4, Hennig discloses, wherein the information processing means is provided with directed-at-supplier and wholesaler ordering means (orders are directed at the suppliers

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from equipment 10) for allowing a dealer having received orders from the customer to automatically place orders to different suppliers or wholesalers depending upon product numbers and categories of ordered merchandise items according to predetermined settings (col.5, ln.64-67; col.6, ln.1-5).

As to claim 5, Hennig discloses, wherein the information processing means is provided with shipment instruction means for allowing a dealer having received orders from the customer to automatically give shipment instructions to different deliverers depending upon areas and ordered merchandise items according to predetermined settings (col.5, ln.64-67; col.6, ln.1-5).

As to claim 8, Hennig discloses, further comprising billing support means (creating invoices and adjusting prices; col.8, Table 1; col.9, Table 1) for automatically calculating expenses and providing a billed part with information of the expenses thus calculated according to billing conditions stored in a billing condition database storing various billing conditions in relation to delivery, distribution and the like when the billed part wants the information.

As to claim 9, Hennig discloses, further comprising billing and payment management support means for supporting billing and payment management at each supplier or distributor (each supplier performs the necessary confirmation and order events) on the basis of sales and buying information according to predetermined settings.

As to claim 10, Hennig discloses, further comprising task apportion support means for allowing dealers to apportion a power of setting in respect of sharing of tasks inherent to a dealer function including customer's ID setting, customer selling price setting and delivery condition setting on a task-by-task basis according to an agreement previously made between the plurality of dealers having overlapping tasks (col.5, ln.52-67; col.6, ln.1-14; the task apportion means can

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assign more than one preferred supplier based on availability constraints and shipping destinations request, and all orders include setting customer ID's, adjusting unit price, and shipping destinations).

As to claim 11, Hennig discloses, further comprising purchasing management means for automatically performing purchasing management of a customer according to purchasing management conditions determined by a combination of the customer and customer information specified by the customer specifying means and product number of a merchandise item ordered by the customer (col.8, Table 1; col.10, Table 2; these tables show purchasing management based on customer orders/conditions and also product/part numbers in the orders).

As to claim 12, Hennig discloses, wherein the purchasing management means is provided with purchased merchandise classification management means for automatically setting and managing an account item code used in an organization to which the customer belongs depending upon a combination of the customer and customer information comprising a budget management unit in the organization specified by the customer specifying means and the product number of a merchandise item ordered by the customer (col.4, ln.39-50; the finance unit).

As to claim 22, Hennig discloses, further comprising application support means for registering an unspecified number of users having made contact with the computer system as customers capable of business dealing through the computer system, the application support means having a function allowing a user to designate a specific dealer by referencing data of dealers previously registered when the user applies for registration (all users are identified through ordering with designated suppliers 14/15/15a through equipment 10; no restriction is placed on the number of users that can access equipment 10).

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As to claim 23, Hennig discloses, further comprising customer registration means (any information of a customer accessing client 10) for allowing a dealer designated by a user to register the user as a customer of the dealer in the computer system (the order event takes information about the customer through an invoice; col.8, Table 1).

As to claim 24, Hennig discloses, further comprising merchandise information database maintenance means for storing information of handleable merchandise items in a merchandise information database incorporated in the computer system and allowing a supplier contacting the computer system to register information of at least merchandise items supplied from the supplier itself in the merchandise information database or renew the information registered in the database (col.5, ln.50-55; col.7, ln.15-35; the inventories of suppliers are on a database, and these are updated at the updating step after the order event).

As to claim 25, Hennig discloses, further comprising purchasing system linkage means (Internet) for linking up with other distribution support equipment (other servers 12) and providing customers utilizing the other distribution support equipment with merchandise information stored in the computer system as information of an original merchandise assortment and purchase prices previously established on a customer-by-customer basis by matching merchandise categories established in the computer system with those established in the other distribution support equipment.

As to claim 26, Hennig discloses, further comprising supplier linkage means (internet 8) for linking up with a supplier 14/15/15a having an original computer system accumulating its own merchandise information to obtain the merchandise information through the computer

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system of the distribution support equipment 12 (the merchandise information is stored in the inventory; col.5, ln.50-60).

As to claim 27, Hennig discloses, wherein the supplier linkage means is configured to enable the merchandise information accumulated in the supplier's computer system to be utilized as merchandise information of the computer system of the distribution support equipment by synchronizing the merchandise categories established in the computer system of the distribution support system 12 (updating inventories; col.7, ln.15-35) with those established in the supplier's computer system and applying a ratio variable price (col.9, Table 1; setting adjusted unit prices) established for each merchandise category to a selling price of a merchandise item belonging to each merchandise category established in the supplier's computer system.

As to claim 29, Hennig discloses, distribution support equipment configured to be run with a computer system, customer-side equipment, distributor-side equipment 12, and supplier-side equipment 14/15/15a, each equipment being accessible to the computer system through a communication channel 8 for supporting business dealings among customers corresponding to the customer-side equipment, distributors corresponding to the distributor-side equipment, and suppliers corresponding to the supplier-side equipment, comprising: a database storing registered customer Ids and respective merchandise distribution routs through which each of plural sorts of merchandise ordered by each of the customers is delivered to the customer; the merchandise distribution routes being determined by the selected distributors and suppliers (col.5, ln.50-67; col.6, ln.1-5); customer specifying means for specifying a customer who accessed the computer system from respective customer-side equipment; route specifying means for specifying each of the business transaction routes for the plural sorts of services by accessing the database and then

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separating one route from another upon receipt of order signals at a time from the customer specified by the customer specifying means to provide the customer with the plural sorts of services; and information processing means for making arrangements for providing the customer with the services meeting the order signals through respective business transaction routes specified by the route specifying means.

As to claim 30, Hennig discloses, further comprising purchasing management means for automatically performing purchasing management on a customer-by-customer basis according to preset purchasing management conditions determined by a combination of the customer specified by the customer specifying means and the sorts of services ordered by the customer.

As to claim 32, Hennig discloses, wherein the distributors 12/12/12 comprise dealers, wholesalers, or both. The servers 12/12/12 are dealers because they are intermediaries that coordinate deals/purchases between customers and suppliers.

As to claim 33, Hennig discloses, wherein the distributors comprise dealers, wholesalers, or both.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 6-7 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hennig US6587827 in view of Chelliah US5710887.

As to claim 6, Hennig discloses, further comprising selling price setting means (col.9, Table 1; adjusted unit price) for automatically setting a final selling price of a merchandise item for a customer giving an order for the merchandise item. The difference between the claim and Hennig is the claim recites, setting a final selling price by adding a profit ratio for a distributor involved in a merchandise distribution route specified by the route specifying means to a selling price set by a supplier. Chelliah discloses a method for electronic commerce similar to that of Hennig. In addition, Chelliah further teaches, setting a final selling price by adding a profit ratio for a distributor involved in a merchandise distribution route specified by the route specifying means to a selling price set by a supplier (col.12, ln.43-60; the final selling price is the unit price plus tax and shipping costs, and this final price is returned to the customer; the shipping costs are a profit ratio that the shipper/distributor adds to the price). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, having the disclosures of Hennig and Chelliah before him at the time the invention was made, to modify the method of Hennig to include the final selling price of Chelliah, to obtain a total cost before continuing an order. One would have been motivated to make such a combination because the ability to know the true total cost before payment would have been achieved, as taught by Chelliah.

As to claim 7, Hennig discloses, automatically providing each distributor with sales and buying information based on delivery information (the method in Hennig is automated, and automatically passes sales and buying information to the suppliers; col.7, ln.35-42). The difference between the claim and Hennig is the claim recites, further comprising sales and buying management means for managing unit selling price and unit buying price for each distributor or supplier according to predetermined settings. Chelliah discloses a method of for

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electronic commerce similar to that of Hennig. In addition, Chelliah further teaches, sales and buying management means for managing unit selling price and unit buying price for each distributor or supplier according to predetermined settings (col.11, ln.10-20). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, having the disclosures of Hennig and Chelliah before him at the time the invention was made, to modify the method of Hennig to include sales and buying management means of Chelliah, to obtain a means for managing unit selling price and buying price for each supplier. One would have been motivated to make such a combination because the ability to apply incentives and determine a price for the customer would have been achieved, as taught by Chelliah (col.11, ln.10-20).

Claim 13 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hennig US6587827 in view of Haymann US5365046.

As to claim 13, the difference between the claim and Hennig is the claim recites, wherein the purchasing management means is provided with approval route management means for automatically performing purchasing management related to a judgment as to whether or not approval is necessary, a maximum sum of money not requiring approval, an approver, an approval route and the like according to purchase regulations stipulated by the organization to which a customer belongs depending upon a combination of the customer and customer information specified by the customer specifying means and the product number of a merchandise item ordered by the customer. Haymann discloses a method of making purchases similar to the purchasing in Hennig (also, it is old and well known to use a credit card as a method of making purchases). Haymann further includes, a purchasing management means is provided with approval route management means for automatically performing purchasing

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management related to a judgment as to whether or not approval is necessary (determines if a purchase using a card requires approval), a maximum sum of money (an upper limit not requiring any approval) not requiring approval, an approver (the PIN holder), an approval route and the like according to purchase regulations stipulated by the organization (credit card company) to which a customer belongs depending upon a combination of the customer and customer information specified by the customer specifying means and the product number of a merchandise item ordered by the customer (col.3, ln.30-68; col.4, ln.1-30). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, having the disclosures of Hennig and Haymann before him at the time the invention was made, to modify the method of Hennig to further include a judgment step, as in Haymann, to obtain a method of minimizing false or faulty purchases. One would have been motivated to make such a combination because the ability to prevent and/or discourage theft would have been achieved, as taught by Haymann (col.2, ln.50-60).

Claims 14-15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hennig US6587827 in view of Loghmani US6377927.

As to claim 14, the difference between the claim and Hennig is the claim recites, wherein the purchasing management means is provided with power setting means for managing the entitlement of a customer to placing orders in an organization to which the customer belongs while judging whether each customer is entitled to a referencing power or an ordering power. Loghmani discloses a method of making purchases similar to that of Hennig. In addition, Loghmani further teaches, a purchasing management means is provided with power setting means for managing the entitlement of a customer to placing orders in an organization to which the customer belongs while judging whether each customer is entitled to a referencing power or

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an ordering power (col.6, ln.45-67; col.7, ln.1-15; the lower level employees can either purchase items, or set them in a database where a manager can approve or disapprove of the purchases). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, having the disclosures of Hennig and Loghmani before him at the time the invention was made, to modify the method of Hennig to further include the power setting means of Loghmani, to obtain a purchasing account with various levels of power and access. One would have been motivated to make such a combination because Hennig already discloses that clients can comprise of separate components (col.4, ln.39-50), and because the ability to approve purchases would have been achieved, as taught by Loghmani.

As to claim 15, Loghmani teaches, wherein the purchasing management means is provided with manager support means for providing a manager in an organization to which a customer belongs with purchasing information of each customer in the organization thereby allowing the manager conduct centralized management of a purchase budget of the organization (col.6, ln.45-67; col.7, ln.1-15).

Claim 16 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hennig US6587827 in view of DiAngelo US6101482.

As to claim 16, the difference between the claim and Hennig is the claim recites, further comprising customer-by-customer based menu management means for enabling customization of setting of a picture displayed on the customer-side equipment and necessary functions of the customer-side equipment on a customer-by-customer basis. DiAngelo discloses a method of making purchase transactions on the web, similar to the method of Hennig. In addition, DiAngelo further teaches, customer-by-customer based menu management means for enabling

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customization of setting of a picture (browser screen) displayed on the customer-side equipment and necessary functions of the customer-side equipment on a customer-by-customer basis (col.5, ln.10-15, ln.35-50). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, having the disclosures of Hennig and DiAngelo before him at the time the invention was made, to modify the equipment and browser in Hennig to also include a customer-by-customer based customization feature of DiAngelo, to obtain a personalized browser. One would have been motivated to make such a combination because the ability to remember customer information after only one entry can be achieved, as taught by DiAngelo (col.5, ln.39-50).

Claim 17 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hennig US6587827 in view of Fisher US6047264.

As to claim 17, the difference between the claim and Hennig is the claim recites, further comprising free form ordering means for allowing a customer to designate a previously registered dealer to which the customer is capable of addressing an inquiry about an order for a merchandise item which has previously not been established through the customer-side equipment as well as for performing sales management handling the merchandise item as a special handling merchandise item according to an agreement made between the customer and the dealer in relation to the inquiry. Fisher discloses a method that includes shipping goods to a customer, similar to that of Hennig. In addition, Fisher further teaches, further comprising free form ordering means for allowing a customer to designate a previously registered dealer (a shipper) to which the customer is capable of addressing an inquiry about an order for a merchandise item (finding out the status of the item) which has previously not been established through the customer-side equipment (accessible from any computer) as well as for performing

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sales management handling the merchandise item as a special handling merchandise item according to an agreement made between the customer and the dealer in relation to the inquiry (col.3, ln.10-31; the customers order enters them into a database that accesses UPS or FedEx, that addresses inquiries in the form of providing status updates on an item, and also that the system is accessible through many remote terminals 210 rather than the single terminal used to place the order). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, having the disclosures of Hennig and Fisher before him at the time the invention was made, to modify the method of Hennig to further include a means to address inquiries, as in Fisher, to obtain status reports on purchased items. One would have been motivated to make such a combination because the ability to track packages would have been achieved, that is accessible over the Internet (col.3, ln.1-31).

Claims 18-19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hennig US6587827 in view of Ortega US6489968.

As to claim 18, the difference between the claim and Hennig is the claim recites, further comprising customer-by-customer based merchandise setting means for establishing at least settings of original categories, names and the like of merchandise items on a customer-by-customer basis aside from categories and names of handleable merchandise items established in the computer system as well as for enabling merchandise item retrieval based on the settings thus made. Ortega discloses a method of purchasing items over the Internet, similar to that of Hennig. In addition, Ortega further teaches, customer-by-customer based merchandise setting means for establishing at least settings of original categories, names and the like of merchandise items on a customer-by-customer basis aside from categories and names of handleable

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merchandise items established in the computer system as well as for enabling merchandise item retrieval based on the settings thus made (col.2, ln.35-65; the method in Ortega makes categories based on popularities, but also displays personalized lists of categories based on the communities that a user belongs to, aside from the usual categories). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, having the disclosures of Hennig and Ortega before him at the time the invention was made to modify the method of Hennig to include merchandise setting and categorization means, as in Ortega, to obtain targeted categories to customers. One would have been motivated to make such a combination because the ability to feature certain items to increase exposure would have been achieved, as taught by Ortega (col.3, ln.10-30).

As to claim 19, Ortega teaches, further comprising customer's set product number management means for allowing a customer to establish a plurality of product numbers (establish personalized categories for the products based on the customers community) as a set aside from product numbers of merchandise items established in the computer system (different than simply categories based on popularity; col.2, ln.35-65) thereby enabling management based on a customer's own single set product number and to place an order also based on the set product number (Hennig already disclose the identification of items by product numbers).

Claim 20 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hennig US6587827 in view of Andrews US6285986.

As to claim 20, Hennig discloses identification of items by part/product numbers. The difference between the claim and Hennig is the claim recites, further comprising supplier's set product number management means for establishing a set of product numbers of plural merchandise items for which a supplier is capable of receiving an order if the merchandise items

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are combined into a finished product and which are established as plural merchandise items in the computer system thereby enabling an order based on a single set product number. Andrews discloses a method of purchasing products similar to that of Hennig. In addition, Andrews further teaches the ability to establish a set of plural items suppliers that are bundled into a "single" product with a single identifier. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, having the disclosures of Hennig and Andrews before him at the time the invention was made, to modify the method of Hennig to include the bundling feature of Andrews, to obtain a method of marketing plural items as a single unit. One would have been motivated to make such a combination because the ability to group products so they do not have to be advertised, sold, and shipped individually would have been achieved, as taught by Ortega (col.2, ln.48-67).

Claim 21 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hennig US6587827 in view of Martin US5809479.

As to claim 21, the difference between the claim and Hennig is the claim recites, further comprising automatic delivery time calculation means for automatically calculating a due date for delivery of a merchandise item ordered by a customer by referencing at least delivery situation of a deliverer and working dates of the customer. Martin discloses a method of shipping an item to a customer similar to that of Hennig. In addition, Martin further teaches using a scheduler to calculate shipping dates (col.3, ln.1-15, ln.55-67; col.4, ln.1-5). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, having the disclosures of Hennig and Martin before him at the time the invention was made, to modify the method of Hennig to include a calculation means, as in Martin, to obtain an order scheduler. One would have been motivated to

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make such a combination because the ability to deliver items on time, with regards to customer preferences, would have been achieved, as taught by Ortega (Abstract).

Response to Arguments

Applicant argues (p. 14) that Hennig is not related to distributors as intermediaries between customer and supplier, and that the claimed invention, on the other hand, provides a system that improves the efficiency of business transactions between customers, suppliers, and intermediate distributors intervening between the customers and suppliers. In response to this argument, Hennig does disclose a system the effects transactions between intermediary distributors 10/12, customers, and suppliers 14/15/15a to improve efficiency. The customer and customer equipment are a first entity that can access a system at 10 in Figure 1. The system uses 10/12 is an intermediary, to link a customer with a supplier, and helps to make deals between the two parties. The supplier 14/15/15a then interacts with the system to use the system as an intermediary to make a deal with the customer.

Conclusion

THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL. Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event,

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however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Thomas Y Ho whose telephone number is (703)305-4556. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F 10:00AM-6:00PM.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, J. J Swann can be reached on (703)306-4115. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

TYH


ROBERT J. SANDY
PRIMARY EXAMINER